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ABSTRACT

A case study explored the roles played by a teacher and her students in a classroom learning community with diverse students as they practiced and developed their literacy knowledge and skills to participate in Book Club, a literature-based instruction program. Specifically, it examines instructional scaffolding, a strategy which assists learners to extend the current skills and knowledge they bring to the classroom to a higher level of competence. The Book Club created the room and space for students to read quality adolescent literature, to write responses to them and to talk about the books together with peers. As time progressed, the dominant teacher-talk and teacher-led talk at the beginning of the year changed to guided student participation and eventually to student-led discussions. In this process of gradual power transfer, the teacher employed various forms of instruction and multiple mediational tools. The instructional forms included explicit instruction, modeling, assisting student participation, building on students' existing knowledge, and participating in the discussion as a participant. The mediational tools included fishbowl discussions, writing prompts, flexible grouping, and student self-evaluation checklists. In the case study, scaffolding was shown to create opportunities for students to practice and develop their literacy knowledge and skills. (Contains 42 references and 4 children's books cited.) (PM)

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Scaffolding in a learning community of practice: A case study of a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the students

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Schools, as one of the society's cultural institutions, have the responsibility of preparing all children with the knowledge, skills, and the dispositions to participate successfully in society. One of the tenets of Vygotskian sociocultural perspective is that learners develop their cultural and psychological functions through participating in the communal cultural practices and interacting with the more knowledgeable members of the community (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981; Wertsch, 1985; Cole, 1997). The process of learning is a process of guided and mediated participation in meaningful/authentic activities where learners construct the meanings of the practice and develop the needed knowledge and skills with support (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989). Lave and Wenger (1991) term this learning process as a transition from "legitimate peripheral participation" to "full participation". Reading and writing are higher cultural and psychological functions and there are certain ways of talking and ways of thinking about texts (Englert & Mariage, 1996). In literacy education, teachers need to create opportunities for students to participate in meaningful reading and writing activities and to construct meanings in collaboration. (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Brock & Gavelek, 1998). The goal of instruction is to gradually release the responsibility from the teacher to the students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) as they develop their literacy knowledge and participation skills with the teacher's guidance and support.

This paper explores the roles played by a teacher and her students in a classroom learning community with diverse students as they practiced and developed their literacy knowledge and skills to participate in Book Club, a

literature-based instructional program. Specifically, it examines the instructional strategy of scaffolding that the teacher used in facilitating students' participation in a learning community of literacy practice. The paper is organized in three sections. The first section discusses scaffolding as an instructional strategy in mediating students' learning. The second section examines a case study where scaffolding is further explored, including the context, the roles played by scaffolders and scaffoldees, the scaffolding techniques, and the mediational tools. The last section explores the implications of the case study in implementing scaffolding as an instructional strategy to create opportunities for students to practice and develop their literacy knowledge and skills.

The sociocultural perspective of learning and development endorses a transformation model of teaching that differs from the traditional transmission model of teaching. The latter defines teachers as knowledge holders who impart their knowledge to the children in their care, while students are blank slate or empty sponge waiting to absorb the knowledge delivered to them. This traditional way of instruction emphasizes "rote learning and student passivity, facts and low-level questions, and low-level cognitive functions. It does little to promote intellectual development, cultural literacy, and thoughtful citizenship" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1989, p.22).

On the other hand, the transformation model guided by the sociocultural perspective aims not only at creating opportunities for student active participation in real literacy practices of a community, which is both the end goal and the means of learning but also requiring teachers, who are the more knowledgeable persons of

the community, to provide guidance and support to their students. Evidence shows that opportunity for participation only is not enough for the students to make the transition from being "peripheral" participants to "full" participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Student performance needs to be guided and mediated in order for learning to take place (Maloch, 2001; Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001). Using scaffolding as an instructional tool allows teachers to provide such guidance and support to assist student performance. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) describe scaffolding as " a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p.90). Like the scaffold that supports workers during the construction of a building and the training wheels on a bicycle that support a child to gain the motor skill of riding (Avery and Graves, 1997), instructional scaffolds assist learners to extend the current skills and knowledge they bring to the classroom to a higher level of competence (Rogoff, 1990).

The concept of scaffolding is grounded in Vygotsky's (1981) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as the distance between what children can do without assistance and what they can accomplish with the assistance of adults or more capable peers. Vygotsky proposed that knowledge is socially constructed and learning occurs through a child's interactions with the more knowledgeable others who provide support within their ZPD in real practice. Stone (1993) analyzed this scaffolding process in terms of semiotic mediation and summarized three communicative mechanisms to explain why scaffolding has the mediational power. These mechanisms are prolepsis, conversational implicature,

and presuppositional triggers, all of which are important in understanding scaffolding within a learner's ZPD. Stone (1993) cited Rommetveit (1974, 1979) and defined prolepsis as "a communicative move in which the speaker presupposes some as yet unprovided information" (p.171). Prolepsis challenges the listener to make assumptions of the speaker's intended meaning. In the interaction between a more knowledgeable adult and a child, prolepsis on the part of the adult directs the child in completing a task as he/she constructs "the adult's understanding of the task goal and of the appropriate means for achieving the goal" and responds accordingly (Stone, 1993, p.172). The second communicative mechanism cited by Stone was Grice's (1989) conversational implicature. While prolepsis presupposes the speaker's intentions and implications in dialogues, conversational implicature enables the interlocutors to convey intentions and implications through the observances or the violations of "conversational maxims", which hold that "an utterance should be relevant, true, clear, and only as informative as is required" (p.173). The third mechanism is the "constitutive" power of language which is realized through the "presuppositional triggers", a concept contributed by Bruner (1986). He defines them as words that trigger suppositions. For example, in the sentence "He thanked the audience for their generous support to the program", the word "thanked" presupposes that "the audience had made generous support to the program". These communicative mechanisms enable the more knowledgeable adults and others to provide assistance via language and cultural norms in their interaction with the learners. They allow learners to operate in their zone of

proximal development (ZPD) to solve problems and achieve goals that would be beyond his or her unassisted efforts.

Meyer (1993) synthesized six distinguishing features of scaffolding instruction, which included (a) teacher support that helps students relate the new information to their prior knowledge; (b) transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the students; (c) dialogue which breaks from the traditional classroom discourse to more student initiated talk; (d) non-evaluative collaboration that focuses on the child's potential for new learning rather than evaluating the child's current competencies; (e) appropriateness of the instructional level defined as what a child can do with assistance within his/her ZPD; (f) co-participation that creates opportunities for students to participate actively and cooperate in directing instruction. Central to all these distinguishing features of scaffolding is the process of gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) as the purpose of scaffolding is to enable the students to accomplish a task on their own which they could not do initially.

Studies on scaffolding have shown that various types of strategies and tools have been used in mediating students' cognitive, social, and linguistic development. They include verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, such as interactive lecturing, teach modeling, and questioning, as well as sign-based systems such as question words, story maps, think-sheets, writing prompts, ground rules for talk, and reading materials (Raphael, 2000; Palinscar & Brown 1984; Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony, & Stevens, 1991; Mercer & Wegerif, 1999; Brown, 1999/2000). Some studies focus on examining verbal interactions and

functions of scaffolding comments (Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; Hogan & Pressley, 1997; Gaskins, Rauch, Gensemer, Cunicelli, O'Hara, Six, & Scott, 1997). Others explore the use of mediational tools, including reading materials, rules for talk, and explanations with hints of various degrees of explicitness (Brown, 1999/2000; Mesmer, 1999; Mercer & Wegerif, 1999; Day & Cordon, 1993). Still others sought applications of scaffolding instruction to pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities to create assistance to students in understanding narrative and expository texts (Johnson & Graves, 1996/1997; Avery & Graves, 1997).

Findings of the studies show that assisting students' performance through dialogic teaching and mediating their learning through cultural tools not only enhance students' learning (Parlinscar and Brown, 1984; Englert, et al., 1991; Mercer & Wegerif, 1999) but also enable them to retain the learning longer and to be more flexible in transferring it to other problem solving situations (Day and Cordon, 1993). However, a review of literature indicates that studies on scaffolding focus mostly on the interaction between the dyads: the learner and a more knowledgeable other, usually a teacher. The emphasis of the uni-direction of scaffolding led Searle (1984) to ask the question "Who's building whose building?" Searle was concerned with the scaffolding practice in which teachers make "children structure their experience to fit their teacher's structures". Thus, more studies are needed to examine the community dynamics in which scaffolding takes place and explore such questions as "Who decides what scaffolds to provide? When and how to provide them? What roles do peers play?"

The sociocultural theory of learning highlights the importance of learner participation in communal practices and collaboration among learners in a learning community context. Thus, interaction is not limited to only between an individual student and the teacher, but also between the teacher and the whole class, and among peers as well, as all members of the community participate in developing a shared practice (Rogoff, 1994; Brown, 1997). Teachers share their end vision of the practice and assist the students to develop the knowledge and skills needed for participating in the practice through multiple instructional strategies, including explicit instruction, modeling and scaffolding. At the same time, students construct their own understanding of what the practice should be and appropriate and internalize the knowledge and skills while being assisted in their participation in the practice. In such context, teachers are facing new challenges in scaffolding student learning. They confront not only such questions as "What scaffolds are needed? When should they be delivered?" but also questions like "When and how to provide scaffolds? Who determines? How can activities be structured to allow more capable peers to mediate other student learning?". By analyzing the data from a year-long case study in which a class of diverse students learned to participate in reading, writing, and talking about books, the current paper hopes to explore what scaffolding strategies the teacher used in a learning community that was developing a shared communal literacy practice.

Background of the Study

Data used for analysis in this paper is from a one-year study of a culturally and linguistically diverse fourth/fifth grade classroom in an inner-city school that

was originally founded to meet the needs of children from the newly arrived immigrant families in this area. When the year began, the class had 25 students, 10 fifth graders and 15 fourth graders, 14 boys and 11 girls. Ethnically, 6 were Vietnamese, 4 Hmong, 4 multi-racial, 3 Caucasian, 3 Latino, 3 Haitian, 1 Somali and 1 Bosnian. Linguistically, over 60% of the students came from homes where a language other than English was spoken. Over 90% of the students in this class had free or reduced payment for meals.

Ellen, the teacher, implemented Book Club, a literature-based instructional program (see McMahon &, Raphael 1997) as the major part of her language arts instruction. The class spent between 70 to 90 minutes every day engaging in Book Club. After their initial fishbowl discussion phase of about 8 weeks, a typical Book Club day began with book clubs (small group discussion), followed by community share (whole class discussion), mini-lesson, group reading, and ended with individual writing responses to prompt questions. During the school year, the class read a total of 11 books, including such books as The Watsons go to Birmingham – 1964, Tuck Everlasting, and Walk Two Moons. New book club groups were formed with each new book unit.

A total of 56 visits of the classroom were made for data collection during the year. Data used for analysis in this paper include mainly the researcher's field notes, and transcripts of audio- and video-tapes of mini-lessons, small group, and whole class discussions.

Analysis of the data reveals a clear pattern of "gradual release of responsibility" (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) from the teacher to the students in

conducting Book Club group and whole class discussions over the school year (Kong & Pearson, 2002). As time progressed, the dominant teacher-talk and teacher-led talk at the beginning of the year changed to guided student participation and eventually to student-led discussions. Students gradually assumed more responsibility in their group and whole class discussions. Their conversations became more "expert like" and focused. They learned to "speak" to one another through sharing thoughts and questioning each other on the common topic. They learned to engage in talks about texts critically and reflectively as their conversations shifted from focusing on factual information to focusing on making meaning of the texts and of their own experiences. The students learned to appreciate the literary texts and enjoy conversing with each other as well. As one student who had been in this country from Vietnam for one year when the study began said in her self-initiated letter to her "dear class" at the end of the school year, "Have you ever consider[ed] me as your important community member? Well, I do, I always felt that you're my best communities [sic] members I ever had. I think that's why school year seem[ed] over too quickly because we enjoyed working together and play[ing] together" (Thi's letter to class on June 12, 1999. All student names in this paper are pseudonyms).

Analysis also shows that Ellen began the year by focusing on establishing a learning environment in which all students felt respected and all ideas were welcomed. She believed that all students had unique experiences valuable for their own and each other's learning and she tried to foster a classroom learning community in which all students believed that everyone in the class, not just the

teacher, had good ideas to contribute to discussions and that they can all learn from talking with each other about books. Ellen had high expectations of her students and believed that they would acquire the skills and knowledge to participate in book conversations in a literary community with her support.

In the next session, I will first examine the instructional strategies and the scaffolding tools the teacher used in helping students develop the literacy knowledge and skills needed to participate in their communal literary practices. Then I will discuss the opportunities for peer scaffolding in such a community of literacy practice.

Analysis and Discussion

The Book Club, as it was structured in Ellen's classroom, created the room and space for her students to read quality adolescent literature, to write their responses to them, and to talk about the books together with their peers. However the process was not without challenges. Though at the beginning of the year Ellen discussed the end view of the Book Club practices with her students and invited a group of students she taught the previous year to do a fishbowl discussion demonstration for her class, students would need assistance to develop their literacy knowledge and skills and to construct a shared practice of a literary community.

Data analysis shows that over the year Ellen assisted her students in developing the knowledge and skills to engage with literary texts with her preplanned and impromptu instruction and by using language and cultural tools. Based on the needs of the students, Ellen's instruction and scaffolding changed

from high teacher control to high student control over the year. At the beginning of the year, Ellen focused on helping her students understand that "discussion is different from sharing" (Transcript, September 22, 1998) and encouraged them to respond to each other's sharing. She emphasized the need for students to respond to writing prompts directly as their written response served as the basis for discussions. She helped students distinguish "fat, juicy" from "skinny" questions and taught them how to form those questions. However, being able to use the right form of questions did not mean that they fully understood the function of the questions (Cazden, 1981). Ellen then tried to make students understand that "you [they] must have a point to make when you [they] ask a question" (Transcript, December 3, 1998). Early in the year, she tried various ways to get students talking. However, when she saw them bringing unwarranted assumptions and assertions in their discussions, she stopped them. She told them "outlandish ideas need to stay out of the discussion" (Transcript, February 9, 1999) as she saw the need to guide the students in developing ways of talking and thinking at a higher level that accorded with the norms and values of the larger literacy community (see Author, in review, for detail). The process of the gradual release of responsibility was dynamic and reciprocal where teacher instruction shaped student participation behaviors and student behaviors helped structure the teacher's scaffolding instruction. In this process of gradual power transfer, Ellen employed various forms of instruction and multiple mediational tools. The instructional forms included explicit instruction, modeling, assisting student participation, building on students' existing knowledge, and participating in the discussion as a participant.

The mediational tools Ellen used included fishbowl discussions, writing prompts, flexible grouping, and student self-evaluation checklists.

Scaffolding Strategies

In the classroom, scaffolding may take the form of modeling, thinking aloud, reminding, and coaching (Brown, 1999/2000). Au and Raphael (1998) summarized 5 different forms of instruction that teachers implementing Book Club programs utilized. They arranged the forms from high teacher control/low student activity to low teacher control/high student activity in the following sequence: explicit instruction, modeling, scaffolding, facilitating, and participating (p.125). In the next session, I will examine how Ellen employed these instructional strategies and others in assisting her students to develop their literacy knowledge and skills over the year.

Explicit instruction. In explicit instruction, the teacher introduces the content to be taught and helps students to master the information and the strategies. In Ellen's classroom, especially at the beginning of the year when she was introducing Book Club, much of the instruction was given in this style. However, Ellen's explicit instruction was not in the form of straight lecture, but rather in the "interactive lecture" format (Raphael 2000) or "dialogic teaching" (Englert, et al., 1991), where the teacher controls the topic of discussion and the turn taking and "invites students to participate by asking them very pointed questions" (Raphael, 2000, p.62). The following is an example of Ellen applying "dialogic teaching" and involving her students in the knowledge construction while she set up the agenda.

Ellen: I have two types of questions that I'm going to talk about. One type of questions I call [writing the words "Fat, juicy questions!" on the overhead]. What do I call it?

Students: Fat, juicy questions.

Ellen: Yes, they have a big, fat question mark, and I call them fat, juicy questions. … If I ask you, Anca, what color is the boy's shirt? Is it a fat, juicy question to you?

Anca: No.

(Transcript, September 1, 1998)

Ellen continued to give more examples of both types of questions for students to judge whether it was a fat, juicy question or not and why. At the end, she defined the term, "A fat, juicy question has no "yes" or "no" answer. No right answer. Because I want you to think about why things might be happening in the book. … and the answer you give is what you think." (Transcript, September 1, 1998). Through the teacher directed "interactive lecture" format, Ellen helped her students understand the concept of "fat, juicy questions", the open-ended questions that are essential for literary conversations.

Modeling. Modeling, the second instructional strategy, is when the teacher demonstrated a particular behavior for the students to learn implicitly and explicitly (Roehler & Duffy, 1991). Ellen modeled various participation behaviors, such as sharing responses to the reading, asking questions, and responding to another student's sharing during minilessons, fishbowl discussions, and whole class discussions. Her modeling of these strategies not only helped contribute to

their conversations about the books, but also provided students examples of participation strategies. The following took place during a fishbowl discussion when she modeled what questions to ask and how to ask them.

Ellen: Wait, I have a question for you. (to Alicia) You said that Marty is a very determined boy. I'd like to know what type of things he did that shows he is determined.

(Transcript, September 1, 1998)

Assisting student participation. Through both verbal and non-verbal means of communication, Ellen assisted student participation by directing students' thinking and language usage so that they would engage in the more in-depth, student-initiated discussions. Sometimes Ellen would repeat the prompt questions to demonstrate how one should respond to them directly; other times, she would challenge the students' ideas. Through these, students were pushed to examine their own thinking and come up with more warranted assertions.

In the following excerpt from their discussion on *Tuck Everlasting*, Ellen was trying to help Andy articulate why he thought a "touch-me-not" appearance of a house was white during a community share. She challenged him to think further, asked him to think on his own feet, and at the same time provided him with hints to guide his thinking. Also evident in this excerpt is the helpful role Andy's peers played in shaping his thinking.

Ellen: What would a touch-me-not appearance house have in it? What does it look like? Andy?

Andy: Maybe white, uh,

Ellen: Maybe white?

Andy: Yeah.

Ellen: Why white?

Andy: Because, because, ...

Ellen: Why do you think it is white?

Andy: Because if it's uh, it's black ...

Student: (inaudible)

Andy: Yeah, better ...

Ellen: Use your own thinking; don't use his thinking. I think you were coming toward it, just keep going.

Andy: Because, uhm, because, maybe, ...

Ellen: What does touch-me-not mean?

Student: Don't touch me.

Andy: OH, because it is white, if you touch it, it'll get dirty.

(Transcript, January 14, 1999)

Building on students' existing knowledge. In teaching new and difficult concepts, Ellen used several different ways to make explicit the connections between what students had already known and the new concepts they were learning. Sometimes, Ellen asked students questions or engaged them in tasks they already knew or were familiar with before introducing the new related concept and task. Other times, Ellen used students' own experiences as examples to illustrate the new concept. For example, she used a fight her class had with another fifth grade class on the soccer ground during the recess to illustrate the concept of

"point of view". Ellen asked the students to think about whether the story they told about the fight would be the same as the one told by the students from the other class and if not, why (Field notes, September 14, 1998). This helped her students understand what point of view was with much less difficulty.

By making explicit the connections between what students already knew or were able to do and the new learning, Ellen included her students as active and knowledgeable participants of the literacy practice by building on their prior knowledge.

Utilizing the "funds of knowledge" within the learning community. Besides helping students connect new knowledge to their prior knowledge, Ellen also created opportunities when the knowledge and skills of the more knowledgeable students in the class became public knowledge. Ellen achieved this in four ways. First, she would draw the class attention to how the more knowledgeable peers responded to text and interacted with each other. For example, Michael and Thahn used paraphrasing and clarifying strategies when they tried to articulate their understanding of other people's views in the volunteer fishbowl discussion on The View from Saturday. Ellen encouraged the students to use the strategy and also explained why they should:

> A few times I heard people say, "I think what she means is…", or "I think what he means is..." It sounds like that you're clarifying that and there's an opportunity for the other person to say, "Yeah, yeah." or "No, that's not what I mean." So that's really good. (Transcript, December 3, 1998)

Second, when introducing tasks requiring challenging cognitive skills, Ellen would ask certain students, presumably more knowledgeable students, to model the task for the class, demonstrating how to think about, talk about, or approach the task. For example, to illustrate what she meant by providing specific evidence and support, Ellen asked the class about The View from Saturday, "Do you think Ms. Olinski thought it was Julian who wrote the word 'cripple' on the board? Why or why not?" Then she called on several students whom she knew would be able to give evidence from the text to support what they said (Field notes, December 9, 1998).

The third opportunity for peer learning occurred when new students joined the class. On these occasions, Ellen would invite the "veteran" students to mentor the new student. On the first day when Munira came, Alicia explained to her what they were doing, "What we do in Book Club is we read the book and we write on the prompts. Then the next day we'll discuss it and we'll have the whole class discussion." Other students also explained to Munira why they did group and class discussions, saying that if some people didn't understand the book, they could ask the people in their group to clarify the confusion (Transcript, December 9, 1998).

Fourth, Ellen also used students' written responses to teach. She discussed with the whole class the strengths of each sample writing as well as places for improvement (Field notes, October 15, 1998).

Participating. Ellen sometimes participated in the discussions, not for the purpose of modeling a behavior or to assist a student as mentioned earlier, but rather with an authentic question to ask or a real urge to share something with the

students . For example, in one of the discussions in May when the class was talking about different expressions their family members used, Ellen shared a saying by her husband following upon what one student said about his father,

> Kind of like when I say to my husband, 'We're going to do this.' He says, 'do you have a mouse in your pocket?' (The class laughed) ... *Do you have a mouse in your pocket* means that IT will go with you because I AM not. Do you understand? So he's [the student's father] saying that there's a rat under the bed that did it, not him... You know what I am saying? (The class laughed.)

(Transcript, May 10, 1999)

Using Activity Structure as Mediational Tool

Vygotsky's (1978,1981) sociocultural theory delineates that all higher (internal) psychological processes originate in purposive social interactions among human beings and they are mediated by tools and cultural artifacts. Engels (1940) believed that human's ability to make tools is the "final, essential distinction between man and other animals" (quoted by Vygotsky, 1978, p.7). Dewey (1934) explained that human beings developed these tools or "works of art" to aid their successful interaction with their natural living environment, both physical and social. The tools included both material/physical tools, such as hammers and computers, and psychological tools, such as gestures, mnemonic techniques, and other semiotic systems, especially language. Kozulin (1986) made a distinction between the functions of these tools and pointed out "while material tools are aimed at the control over processes in nature, psychological tools master natural

forms of individual behavior and cognition" (p.xxv). However, cultural artifacts were not only invented for human beings to integrate with the environment, they also became tools to mediate learning and human thinking. In her class, Ellen employed such cultural tools to help students develop literacy knowledge and skills needed for them to participate in Book Club activities. For example, she used the fishbowl activity as a tool, which enabled her to model and mediate students' participation in the public space of the whole class before moving into group discussions. She used the writing prompts as a tool to push students to read and to think critically and reflectively with open-ended but pointed questions. Ellen also used rubrics as a tool to engage students in self-evaluation of their own written responses as well as their participation in discussions.

Fishbowl discussion. To help students develop the knowledge and skills to participate in literary talk about books in small groups, Ellen explained to them what they should do, invited students she taught the previous year to demonstrate in a fishbowl discussion, and finally engaged the class in taking turns conducting fishbowl discussions. Ellen put two extra chairs at the fishbowl table, which allowed the rest of the class to join the fishbowl discussion if they had questions to ask or comments to make, instead of being a passive onlooker. The public space created by the two extra chairs at the fishbowl table gave the more knowledgeable members of this learning community, including both the teacher and the more capable peers, the opportunity to model appropriate ways-of-talking and ways-of-thinking about literary texts (Englert & Mariage, 1996).

Writing prompts. Ellen's writing prompts consisted of open-ended questions grouped under topics such as Me and the Book, Point of View, Character Map, Interpretations, and others. Students responded to these questions based on their understanding of the chapters they read and used their writing as the basis for group discussion. By responding to these questions, students were pushed to examine and analyze the text, synthesize it, interpret it, make personal and intertextual connections, articulate their own ideas, and provide support or evidences for their arguments. Students also learned about certain structural techniques, such as ways of organizing and presenting ideas and ways of arguing one's point. Over the school year, students wrote 122 responses, most of the time with a writing prompt. Occasionally, students got a free choice to respond to anything they wanted in the book. The writing prompts, as an instrumental tool, facilitated students in developing their literary knowledge and skills.

Student self-evaluation. In Book Club, students were asked at various occasions to evaluate their own learning and each other performance. When preparing for the portfolio, students completed an "End-of-Book Self-Assessment" with questions that encouraged them to reflect on their experiences in the book unit and assess their own performance. Students were asked how they liked the book, what they liked about working with the book, what grade they would give themselves, and what area(s) they would focus on for self improvement for the next book. Students also chose one good response entry and wrote a sticky note explaining why they believed it was their best. After Ellen graded their portfolio,

students responded to her comments and grading by setting up new goals for improvement for the next book unit.

To self-evaluate their performance in group discussions, Ellen's students were given a checklist that focused their attention to listening and responding to each other, asking open-ended questions, having positive attitudes, and other behaviors that would lead to productive conversations about books (Field Notes, September 3, 1998). By involving students in self-evaluation, these rubrics and assessment forms became useful tools to mediate students' understanding of what the Book Club practice was like at the same time.

In various ways, these psychological and structural tools, the fishbowl format, writing prompts, and student self-evaluation, helped mediate students' construction of knowledge and skills needed to participate in responding and talking about literary texts in their classroom learning community.

Peer Scaffolding

Book Club routine created the opportunities for students to share ideas, provide feedback, construct meanings together, and learn from each other. In a learning community of practice, all students are regarded as knowledgeable and contributing members to the construction of a communal practice. Opportunities are created for students to practice and develop the knowledge and skills needed for participation in this practice. In the process, students interact with each other as well as the teacher to construct the knowledge collaboratively. They modify their perceptions and behaviors to achieve the end goal of a shared practice. In such a community, scaffolding comes not only from the teacher, but also from the more

knowledgeable peers (Brown, 1997). Plenty of evidences on various occasions from Ellen's classroom demonstrate this peer scaffolding and support as they constructed meanings of the text collaboratively. The following are just three examples.

Helping each other articulate thoughts. In the following excerpt from an early community share discussion about Number the Stars, Rico was helping Thahn figure out why he felt there was a happy mood in the room. Rico rephrased Ellen's question to Thahn, restated it again, and finally suggested a tentative answer.

Ellen: (to Thahn) Why do you say it was a happy mood?

Thahn: I am not (inaudible)

Rico: Like what part of the book that made you feel that mood?

Thahn: (inaudible)

Rico: Like happy, what part of the book that made you happy?

... ...

Thahn: (inaudible and silence)

Rico: I think you mean that it's happy because mama didn't get caught?

Thahn: Yeah.

(Transcript, November 18, 1998)

Constructing the meaning of "divorce". In the following conversation, Andy, Thahn, and Michael explained the meaning of the word "divorce" upon Thi's request. They told her that it meant "you sign paper" and became only "friends" when you don't want to be married after marriage; in other words, "you

dump them" (Transcript, December 3, 1998). This is an example of how group members listened to each other, built on each other's ideas, and collaboratively constructed the meaning of a word.

Thi: What does divorce mean?

Andy: When you marry someone and you want to marry

Thahn: And then you don't want to marry them and you sign paper

Andy: Then you get divorced and you can only be friends.

Thahn: You divorce.

Michael: You dump them. [laughter and smiles from all group members]

(Transcript, December 3, 1998)

Challenging each other's ideas: stealing or borrowing? During one discussion on the book Walk Two Moons, Andy said that he thought Grandma and Grandpa were crazy because they stole a tire from a Senator's car in Washington. Tu challenged his assumption and said they were only borrowing. In the following conversation, although they didn't come to an agreement about whether Grandma and Grandpa were "stealing" or "borrowing", two different perspectives were presented in public. At the same time, they also provided support for their opinions.

Tu: How are they crazy?

Andy: Of course they are crazy, because only crazy persons are going to go to rob tires from a [Senator].

Tu: They didn't rob it.

Andy: Yes they did. They stole it.

Tu: They borrowed it to them.

Andy: SO, they stole them.

Vong: That's the kind of borrowing.

Andy: So I go and steal someone's video games and I'm just borrowing them?!

Tu: To them they are borrowing and to other people they are stealing.

(Transcript, May 3, 1999)

Conclusion

Learning as guided participation presumes availability of opportunities for students to participate and interact with each other in meaningful and authentic activities. Book Club, with the opportunities for students to read, write responses, and talk in both small groups and the whole class, created the time and space for students to participate in meaningful literacy activities and to construct meanings of the texts and their own experiences collaboratively. To make scaffolding work in a classroom learning community where students feel psychologically safe to participate in shared literacy practice requires teachers to believe that (a) students are capable and knowledgeable beings, (b) students can learn, and (c) teachers can make a difference (Langer, 2001). This case study demonstrated several necessary features of scaffolding in a classroom learning community. First, the teacher, as the more knowledgeable adult in the community, need to employ various scaffolding instructional strategies and use the mediational tools offered by the program to provide students with both direct instruction and the moment-to-moment assistance to mediate their participation. Second, the direction of scaffolding needs to be a

"two-way traffic" to allow teachers to provide the guidance and support within the students' zones of proximal development. Third, space should be created for the more capable peers in the community to demonstrate their literacy knowledge and skills and to scaffold each other's learning. Students bring with them different cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and prior knowledge to the learning and they each could be the more capable peers in areas they have the expertise. In those occasions, they could demonstrate the more-expert ways of responding, talking, and thinking about books and assist their peers in their development of these skills. Finally, as students increase their literacy knowledge and skills through assisted participation in the shared practice in a literary community, the teacher would gradually releases his/her responsibility to the students (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The process for the class to develop a communal practice is at the same time a literacy learning process for the students through their "assisted performance" (Tharp and Gallimore, 1989). We can learn to swim only through practicing swimming in the water and students can only learn to respond and talk about literary texts through engaging in conversations about books with others.

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